

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION REQUEST

The following constitutes an application for preliminary consideration for the nomination potential of a property to the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. This does not mean that a property is being nominated to the registers at this time. Rather it is being evaluated to determine if it qualifies for such listings. Applicants will be notified of the board's actions in writing shortly after the meeting.

Please **type** and use 8-1/2" X 11" paper if additional space is needed.

All submitted materials become the property of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and cannot be returned.

1. HISTORIC NAME OF PROPERTY (if historic name is not known, use current name of area)

BALLENTINE PLACE

2. LOCATION

A. Street or Route Cape Henry Road

B. County or City Norfolk, Virginia

3. LEGAL OWNER/S OF PROPERTIES. Include names and addresses of all property owners in district. Attach additional sheets if necessary. (See Attached)

Name:

Address:

City/State: _____ ZIP

4. GENERAL DATA

A. Date or dates of selected buildings: Early 20th century

B. Approximate acreage: less than 10 acres

C. Architects or carpenter/masons (if known):

D. Primary Use of Buildings: Residential; Single-family

5. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Ballentine Place is today located in the center of the city, sandwiched between several suburban neighborhoods, including Fairmont Park on the north, Belmont Place on the west, and Coleman Place on the east. The eastern boundary of the area is defined by the Norfolk and Western Railroad line and the southern boundary by the Norfolk Southern Railroad line. While the entire area historically and currently defines the Ballentine Place neighborhood, only a small, linear section of the area, aligned along the Norfolk Southern Railroad line, is being proposed for historic district designation. This area extends from Cromwell Road on the east to Keller Avenue on the west and includes only those properties facing the railroad tracks along Cape Henry Road.

The Ballentine Place neighborhood generally consists of small, modest-income houses that were built primarily between the Wars.

The houses are typically frame structures defined by their bungalow forms and pattern-book or kit-house appearance. They are built close together and have small or no front yards. A median strip between the rows of houses and streets are landscaped with crepe myrtles. The group of houses facing the railroad tracks and located within the proposed historic district, are larger, more substantial buildings that date to the second decade of the twentieth century--the earliest years of the neighborhood's development. These houses are generally of brick construction, are two and 2-1/2-stories in height as opposed to one story, and are designed in a vernacular Classical Revival style. They are aligned at a skewed angle to the street, are set back from it, and have large front yards shaded by mature trees.

PIF--Ballentine Place, Norfolk, VA
October 1994

Each house is defined architecturally by its gracious front porch and its dignified appearance.

Though not representative of the residential architecture making up the Ballentine neighborhood, these houses survive as the oldest and architecturally most distinctive houses in the development and represent the physical growth of the area from its rural roots in the 19th century to the working-class community that it is today.

6. HISTORY

Originally the plantation of Thomas R. Ballentine, the Ballentine Place residential subdivision was platted in the first decade of this century and was progressively built upon with houses over the years. Although some houses were built as early as 1909 and being advertised for sale at that time, the subdivision was primarily developed between the Wars with modest, affordable houses for the working class population. Ballentine Place is noteworthy in the history of Norfolk for its association with Thomas R. Ballentine, prominent local landowner and philanthropist¹, and as a working-class residential subdivision.

Thomas R. Ballentine grew up on a farm in Currituck County, North Carolina. During the Civil War, he joined the Norfolk County Rifle Patriots, Company F. Following the War, Ballentine opted not to go back to his family farm in Currituck, but instead, judiciously bought other farms that had gone to ruin by mismanagement. He then returned them to working order and sold them at a profit. During Reconstruction, his keen business sense earned him the elected position of Norfolk City Councilman.

Ballentine's Plantation in Norfolk was located just within the line of trenches thrown up by the Confederacy in 1861 to save Norfolk from invasion. In the first decade of this century, the area was platted with its eastern and southern boundary formed by the Norfolk and Western Railroad tracks and the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks, respectively. In 1923, more than a decade after its development as Ballentine Place, the neighborhood was annexed by the city, along with Ocean View, Edgewater and Larchmont. Unlike Edgewater and Larchmont which were upperclass neighborhoods, Ballentine Place was laid out as a grid system with small lots meant to appeal to the working class. Instead of a relentless grid, however, Ballentine actually consisted of a series of long and narrow blocks punctuated on center by a large, open space built with a school. Where the blocks on the southern end of the subdivision intersected with the spur of the Norfolk and Western Railroad, larger irregularly-shaped lots were formed. It is on those irregularly-shaped, corner lots where the older, more substantial houses, which are being proposed as an historic district, sit and face the tracks of the Norfolk Southern Railroad line.

By 1928, the area was far from mature. The central section of

¹ Thomas R. Ballentine founded and built the Ballentine Home for the Aged in 1894.

PIF--Ballentine Place, Norfolk, VA
October 1994

the grid, from Harrell Avenue on the west and Grandy Avenue on the east, was more fully built upon with houses, while the streets closest to the Norfolk and Western Railroad tracks on the east were almost void of development. Although the area was clearly a defined neighborhood with clustered development, much of the residential growth in the area occurred between the Wars and into the 1940s. By then the area was a well-established, stable working class community.

In the 1960s, the residents of Ballentine Place fought white flight as African Americans, driven from their former homes by redevelopment, sought housing they could afford in Ballentine Place. Despite initial reports of panic selling in the neighborhood by white residents, real estate prices remained stable and racial integration occurred harmoniously.

Ballentine Place survives today as a racially mixed, working class community. Although its architecture generally lacks distinction, the area provides important information on the socio-economic development of Norfolk and provides a good example of a working class residential community.

7. PHOTOGRAPHS

Black and white photographs and color slides of general views and streetscapes must be provided. Photographs of important buildings in district would also be helpful. The inclusion of photographs is essential to the completion of this application. Without photographs, this application can not be considered.

8. MAP

Please include a map showing the location of the proposed district. A sketch map is acceptable but please not street route numbers, addresses, buildings, prominent geographic features, etc. Please include a "north" arrow. This form can not be processed without a map showing the property's exact location.

9. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

10: APPLICANT INFORMATION

NAME: TRACERIES TELEPHONE: 301-656-5283

ADDRESS: 5420 Western Avenue
CITY/STATE: Chevy Chase, MD 20015

SIGNATURE

DATE: September 19, 1994

PIF--Ballentine Place, Norfolk, VA
October 1994

PROPERTY NAME: Ballentine

**PLEASE SUPPLY THE FOLLOWING NAMES AND ADDRESSES AS APPLICABLE.
THIS INFORMATION MUST BE PROVIDED BEFORE YOUR PIF CAN BE
CONSIDERED BY THE STATE REVIEW BOARD:**

Mayor: Paul D. Fraim
1109 City Hall Building
Norfolk, VA 23501

City Manager:
James B. Oliver, Jr.
1101 City Hall Building
Norfolk, VA 23501

Director, Planning Division

John M. Dugan, Director
Dept. of City Planning and Codes Administration
508 City Hall Building

Chairman, Planning Commission

Dr. William L. Craig, Jr.
451 Lee Point Road
Norfolk, VA

Executive Director

Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
Arthur L. Collins
723 Woodlake Drive
Chesapeake, Virginia 23320

City Council member or Supervisor in whose district the property
is located:

Herbert M. Collins, Sr.
Rev. Joseph N. Green, Jr.

PIF--Ballentine Place, Norfolk, VA
October 1994

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cobb, Richard. "Tree-lined Ballentine Place Is Reminder of Good Old Days," The Virginian Pilot, March 9, 1980.

Ledger-Dispatch, February 5, 1910. Advertisement for lots in Ballentine Place.

Mulqueeney, Terri. "Friendliness, Convenience Strong Points," Norfolk Compass, August 3, 1978.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1910, 1928.

Squires, W.H.T. "Norfolk in By-Gone Days: Ballentine Place," Norfolk Ledger Dispatch, April 28, 1938.

"Sweet Old Women Find Ballentine Home Wonderful," The Virginian Pilot, August 21, 1921.